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A new species of *Mirafra* (Alaudidae) and new races of the Somali Long-billed Lark *Mirafra somalica*, Thekla Lark *Galerida malabarica* and Malindi Pipit *Anthus melindae* from southern coastal Somalia

by P. R. Colston

Received 17 February 1982

MIRAFRA ssp

Six specimens of a new lark were collected by Dr J. S. Ash 13 km north of Uarsciek (=Warsheikh), some 80 km NE of Mogadiscio, in southern Somalia on 9 and 10 July 1981. He found that they differed significantly from other members of the *Alaudidae* that he knew from his wide field experience in north Africa. A cursory glance through the literature (e.g.

(Mackworth-Praed & Grant 1955) showed them probably to be a new species, and as there was insufficient comparative material in the National Museum of Kenya, he kindly forwarded them to the British Museum (Natural History) (BMNH) for appraisal. Comparison with BMNH material shows the Uarsciek larks to be similar in structure and plumage to other *Mirafra* species and closest to *M. somalica*, which occurs at the same locality and has been collected at Uarsciek, 2° 17' N, 45° 44' E (Roche 1966), although it is not shown in Hall & Moreau (1970). I have pleasure in naming the new lark after Dr John Ash who has contributed much valuable work on the birds of Somalia.

***Mirafra ashi* sp. nov.**

Holotype: Unsexed adult (probably ♂ on size); 13 km north of Uarsciek, southern Somalia, 2° 17' N, 45° 50' E, 10 July 1981. Collected by Dr J. S. Ash and prepared by J. E. Miskell. Lodged in the British Museum (Natural History), B.M. No. 1982-3-1.

Description: Similar in structure to the sympatric *Mirafra somalica*, but smaller in its proportions (Table 1), with a shorter bill and darker plumaged above. Whereas *somalica* is bright cinnamon-rufous above, *ashi* is greyish-brown above with a very faint overlaying wash of cinnamon. It is also considerably more streaked and scaly looking above in general appearance than *somalica*.

The head is ash-brown with a light cinnamon wash to the nape and hind neck. The feathers on the forehead have blackish brown centres with buff to grey tips and the longer grey-brown feathers of the crown are narrowly streaked dark brown. There are signs of a vestigial crest with a few elongated crown feathers reaching 11 mm in length. The streaking on the crown extends to the hind neck and upper back. The feathers of the mantle, shoulders and lower back have their centres marked with dark brown and are edged with narrow dark brown subterminal bands fringed with conspicuous buff to white edges, giving the upper parts a scalloped appearance. The rump is greyish-brown, the feathers narrowly edged whitish to buff, and the upper tail coverts have inverted V-shaped bands of dark brown near their tips with paler buff edging. The wing coverts, which are pale cinnamon buff, have their central shafts narrowly marked dark brown and margined with narrow dark brown subterminal bands broadly edged with buffish-white. The tertials are pale brown, each with a dark brown central shaft, and narrow dark brown subterminal bands with broad buffish white edges (2 mm wide). Faint barring is present on the tertials with some 8 narrow grey-brown bars clearly visible. Like *somalica*, the primaries and outer secondaries have broad cinnamon margins for the basal two-thirds of their length and the remaining wedge-shaped portions are dusky brown. The underwing coverts are pale cinnamon and unmarked. The sides of the face and ear coverts are whitish streaked dark greyish with a cinnamon wash to the ear coverts. The lores are white but the buffish-white eyestripe is narrow, ill defined and does not extend much beyond the eye, whereas in *somalica* it is well marked and extends to the nape. The throat and sides of the neck are buffish-white finely spotted with grey on the lower throat enlarging to browner spots and streaking on the upper breast, which is suffused with

pale cinnamon-buff. The sides of the body and flanks are also cinnamon-buff, with a few narrow brown streaks and the rest of the underparts are whitish-buff to white on the belly. The undertail coverts, like *somalica*, are streaked dark brown. The tail feathers, which are narrower and more pointed than in *somalica*, are dusky-brown with the central pair edged cinnamon. The outer tail feathers are narrowly edged white (1.5 mm wide) on both their inner and outer webs; *somalica* also has white outer tail feathers but the white is more conspicuous (3-3.5 mm wide). It is worth mentioning that the rather similarly plumaged *M. sharpei*, which is found in a restricted area of North Somalia, has no white in the tail, and also differs from both *somalica* and *asbi* in its very short curved, not straight hind claw (6-7 mm), compared with *somalica* (11-15 mm) and *asbi* (11-15 mm).

Colour of soft parts at time of collecting: iris dark ? brown; legs and feet creamy; upper mandible dark grey, lower mandible pale bluish-grey.

Measurements of type: Wing (flattened) 89, tail 51, culmen from base of skull 24, tarsus 30, hind claw 14.5 mm; weight 40.2 gms at time of collecting.

TABLE I

Measurements of *Mirafraga asbi* sp. nov. and *M. somalica* (mm and gm) (0=unsexed)

<i>M. asbi</i> (5 ♂, 1 ♀)			<i>M. somalica</i> (9 ♂♂, 3 ♀♀)		
wing	(unsexed)	80-94 (mean 86.6)	wing	♂♂	95-107 (mean 102)
tail	(unsexed)	50-56 (mean 52.8)	tail	♂♂	58-72 (mean 66.6)
bill	(unsexed)	21-24 (mean 22.9)	bill	♂♂	23-29 (mean 26.6)
tarsus	(unsexed)	29-30 (mean 29.4)	tarsus	♂♂	30-34 (mean 31.8)
weight	(unsexed)	31.3-41.9 (mean 37)			
wing	♀	82	wing	♀♀	90-95 (mean 92)
tail	♀	47 (moulting)	tail	♀♀	58-60 (mean 58.7)
bill	♀	22	bill	♀♀	23-25 (mean 24.3)
tarsus	♀	29	tarsus	♀♀	30-32 (mean 31)
weight	♀	35.7			

Other specimens collected: Only one of the 3 adults (all collected on 10 July), which includes the type, was sexed. It was a ♀ in full breeding condition with the largest ova measuring 12 mm and another 8 mm. What is unusual about this specimen is that it was in full wing and tail moult. The central tail feathers are only half grown and are greyer than the type, being dusky-grey tipped white. The remaining 3 birds collected on 9 July are not fully adult. They have broad cinnamon to buffish-white edges to the primaries and secondaries and are browner on the head and back. The brown spotting on the breast is finer and the underparts show more cinnamon-buff and less white on the belly. The two youngest have the shortest bills (21, 21 mm), which are paler horn. They have paler legs and feet than the type and have less well developed hind-claws (11, 12 mm). All 3 immatures show more white in their outer tail feathers than the adult, with one of the 2 youngest having most of the outer tail feather white for the last 16 mm or so of its length.

MIRAFRA SOMALICA

Mirafra somalica has been thought to be monotypic and confined to a rather small well-defined area in the red soil desert of the plateau of British Somalia east and south of Burao (see Fig. 1), extending into north Somalia and occurring nowhere else. Archer (Archer & Godman 1961) considered the real stronghold of this lark to be on the Arori Plain near Burao, with the

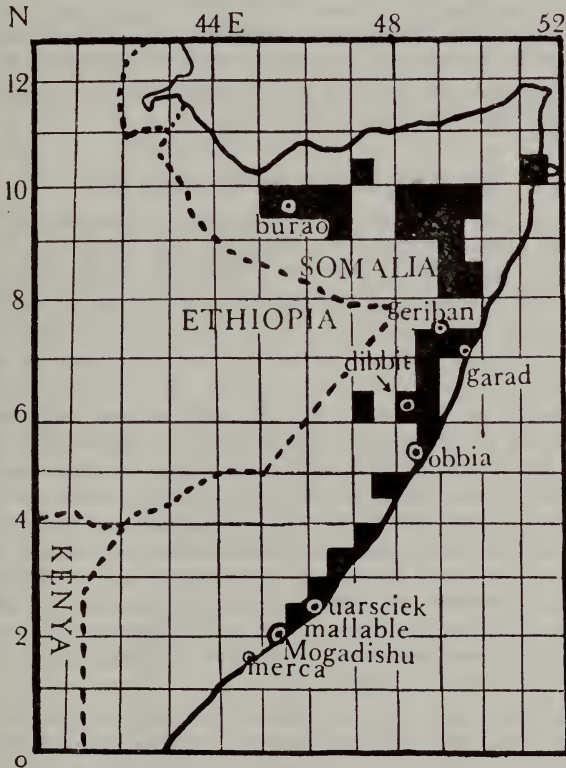


Figure 1. Map to show the more extensive range of *Mirafra somalica* in Somalia than was previously known. It incorporates mainly sight records plus a few specimens collected by Dr. J. S. Ash together with existing data.

■ $\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ squares where species now known to exist.

extreme western limit of its range on the Tuyo Plain 60 km further west. The known eastern limit of its range in the north is some 400 km eastwards, stretching into the northern Haud to the vicinity of Gardo (see Map 7, Hall & Moreau 1970). The type of *somalica* was collected at Dibbit in the Mudug area, some 400 km south of Gardo. In August 1962, Roche collected an adult ♂ and ♀ between Geriban and Garad and an adult ♂ at Geriban some 160 km northeast of the type locality (Roche 1975). He also collected an adult ♂ much further south at Uarsciek on 16 Sep 1962 (Roche 1966). More

recently Ash obtained an adult ♂ some 24 km northeast of Uarsciek (see map) on 30 Mar 1979, which he kindly presented to BMNH (B.M. No. 1980.7.1). Through the kindness of Dr Jean Roche in arranging a loan of some of the specimens that he collected, I have been able to compare the 2 southern Uarsciek larks with the other specimens from the Geriban area together with the BMNH type of *somalica* from Dibbit and more northern birds in the BMNH collections from around Burao and Gardo. When compared with the type, the Uarsciek larks differ significantly in the colouration of their upper parts, being darker brown to chestnut-brown above. The breast and sides of the neck are also more heavily streaked. I have pleasure in naming this new form after Dr Jean Roche who has contributed much valuable ornithological work in Somalia.

***Mirafrā somalica rochei* subsp. nov.**

Holotype: ♂; 24 km northeast of Uarsciek, southern Somalia, 02° 17' N, 45° 50' E, 30 Mar 1979. Collected by Dr J. S. Ash, prepared by Mohamed Mumin. Lodged in the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), B.M. No: 1980.7.1.

Description: When compared with the type the upper parts are chestnut-brown rather than pale cinnamon-rufous. The crown is also considerably darker chestnut-brown with a few feathers on the forehead having dark brown centres and some darker streaking on the nape. The feathers of the back and shoulders are brownish-chestnut with narrow dark brown centres and are edged pale greyish-white. The wings are browner than the type and the primaries and outer secondaries have darker cinnamon edges for the basal two-thirds of their length. The under wing coverts are also darker cinnamon. The chin and throat are white with dark brown spotting on the lower throat and more extensive chestnut-brown streaking on the breast. The sides of the neck and breast are more conspicuously washed than the type with dark cinnamon and streaked dark brown, the markings on the throat and breast of the type being much paler, fewer and less well defined. The rest of the plumage is similar to the type, although the Uarsciek birds would appear to be whiter on the belly.

Colours of soft parts: Iris light chocolate; tarsus creamy-white; bill colour was not noted at time of collection, but from the skin is dark horn and pale whitish-horn below with a dark brown tip. Colours at time of collection.

Measurements of type: Wing (flattened) 95, tail 64, culmen from base of skull 26, tarsus 32 mm.

Other specimens and remarks: The ♂ collected on 16 Sep is in moult and is similar to the type although it is browner above. The feathers of the forehead have darker blackish-brown centres and the head and neck are more strongly streaked dark brown.

When the more northerly birds from Burao, Arori Plain and Gardo are compared with the rest of the material available they would appear to be appreciably larger (see Table 2) than specimens from the central localities of Geriban and Dibbit or the more southern birds of Uarsciek, etc. Not only is there a cline of decreasing size from north to south but there appear to be clinal differences in the colouration of the upper parts. In the north the specimens have the upperparts rich cinnamon-rufous, including the rump.

The type of *somalica* from Dibbit and the other Geriban and Garad specimens are greyer on the rump and upper tail coverts and the overall colouration of the upperparts is less rufous with more noticeable grey fringes to the feathers on the back.

TABLE 2

Measurements (mm) of *Mirafra somalica* to show size difference between the northern birds and the central/southern birds.

<i>N. Somalia</i> (Buraq, Arori Plain & Gardo)			<i>Central and S. Somalia</i> (Geriban, Garad, Dibbit, Uarsciek)		
No. of specimens: 4 ♂♂, 2 ♀♀			No. of specimens: 5 ♂♂, 1 ♀		
wing	♂♂	103-107 (mean 105)	wing	♂♂	95-102 (mean 98.4)
tail	♂♂	68-72 (mean 69.5)	tail	♂♂	58-66 (mean 63.2)
bill	♂♂	26-29 (mean 27.8)	bill	♂♂	23-26 (mean 24.8)
tarsus	♂♂	30-32 (mean 31.3)	tarsus	♂♂	31-32 (mean 31.8)
wing	♀♀	91, 95 (mean 93)	wing	♀	90
tail	♀♀	58, 60 (mean 59)	tail	♀	58
bill	♀♀	25, 25 (mean 25)	bill	♀	23
tarsus	♀♀	31, 32 (mean 31.5)	tarsus	♀	30
	*		*		*

GALERIDA MALABARICA

A very grey example of *Galerida malabarica* collected in Somalia by Dr John Ash is quite different from the typical sandy-brown *G. m. ellioti* inhabiting the more northern and interior areas of Somaliland. Also in the B.M. collection is another similarly greyish-brown, fresh plumaged bird from the same area of southern coastal Somalia. It was collected at Merca (100 km south of Ash's specimen from Mallable) by J. G. Williams on 29 Jan 1954. White (1961), gives the range of *ellioti* as the interior of British Somaliland south into Italian Somaliland to Galkayu (=Gallaciao) and Merca. He mentions that specimens from the latter are greyer, less sandy-yellow than the more northern birds and may be separable. The 2 specimens from Mallable and Merca confirm his earlier opinion, being greyer above and lacking the warm sandy brown tones typical of *ellioti*. There is evidently a greyer plumaged population in the Mogadishu area.

Galerida malabarica mallablensis subsp. nov.

Holotype: Adult ♂; Mallable 30 km northeast of Mogadishu, southern Somalia, 2° 12' N, 45° 37' E. 16 Dec 1978. Collected by Dr J. S. Ash. Lodged in the British Museum (Natural History), B.M. No: 1982-3-6.

Description: The head is heavily streaked dark brown like *ellioti*, but having the feathers edged pale greyish or pale buffish rather than warm sandy-brown, and lacking the cinnamon wash to the nape typical of *ellioti*. The sides of the head are whitish strongly streaked dark brown, but lack the cinnamon wash to the ear coverts present in *ellioti*, and the eye stripe is white rather than creamy-buff. The upperparts have a distinct greyish caste when compared with a long series of the more warm rufous-brown or sandy-brown *ellioti*. The back and mantle are strongly marked dark greyish-brown

and the feathers are edged mainly pale greyish or whitish with a few pale greyish-buff. The wings are grey-brown rather than sandy-brown and the wing coverts are broadly edged whitish, whereas they are margined pale sandy-brown in *elliotti*. The lower back and rump are greyer and the upper tail coverts are pale buff in contrast to the more brightly coloured cinnamon upper tail coverts of *elliotti*. The breast is more heavily streaked dark brown and the sides of the body are washed greyish rather than the buffish-brown of *elliotti*. The underparts are white, lacking the warm buff tones to the breast and more creamy underparts of *elliotti*. The underwing coverts are very pale buffish-white in contrast to the darker cinnamon-buff of *elliotti*. The tail is greyer, less brown and the outer tail feathers are whitish rather than pale tawny-brown. Overall the bird is colder grey-brown above and whiter below, lacking all the warmer buff or brownish tones present in *elliotti*.

Colour of soft parts (at time of collecting): Iris dark? brown; legs pale brown; bill greyish-horn, paler below.

Measurements of type: Wing (flattened) 96, tail 51, culmen from base of skull 16.5, tarsus 22 mm, weight 33.8 gms.

Other East African forms: Apart from *elliotti* and *mallablensis* of Somalia, 4 other races occur in East Africa, south of the Sahara: *praeternissa* in the highlands of Ethiopia and Eritrea; *barrarensis* known from 3 specimens collected in the north of the province of Harrar, Ethiopia (Erard & Jarry 1973); *hueti* from the mountains of Bale, Ethiopia (Erard & de Naurois 1973), separated by the Rift valley from those found in other high plateaux in Ethiopia; and *huriensis* of north Kenya, where it has been collected within 8 km of the frontier with Ethiopia (Benson 1945).

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ANTHUS MELINDAE

Seven specimens of *Anthus melindae* were obtained by Dr John Ash from 2 separate localities in southern Somalia. This is a coastal species of very limited distribution found only in Kenya and southern Somalia. Britton (1980) records that it is numerous in the littoral grasslands of Kenya (from Ngomeni to Karawa), and widespread though less common in the contiguous riparian grasslands of the lower Tana River. However, little has been recorded of its breeding biology in southern Somalia, although more recently Roche (1975) has collected specimens in the Giohar area (100 km from the coast), 50 km north of Balad. A series of 3 ♂♂ (in fresh plumage) collected by Ash on 6 Feb 1979 together with an earlier ♀ (in moult), on 28 Dec 1978, from Hawaala Buray, near Balad (2° 26' N, 45° 17' E), are typical examples of this dark earth-brown plumaged pipit. Shortly after collecting the 3 earlier February birds, Ash obtained a further 3 ♀♀ on 16 Feb 1979, near the coastal locality of Mallable. These coastal specimens differ significantly both from the Hawaala Buray series taken some 60 km inland from Mallable and also from specimens in the B.M. collections from Kenya (Chamgamwe, Mombasa and Malindi), including the type from Malindi. They are smaller in size, and the upperparts are paler ash-brown. Below they are whiter and the breast is streaked paler grey-brown in contrast to the

strongly streaked dark brown breast, flanks and abdomen in both sexes of typical *melindae*.

***Anthus melindae pallidus* subsp. nov.**

Holotype: Adult ♀; Mallable, 30 km northeast of Mogadishu, southern Somalia, 2° 12' N, 45° 37' E. 16 Feb 1979. Collected by Dr J. S. Ash. Lodged in the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), B.M. No: 1980-7-2.

TABLE 3. Comparative differences in size between *Anthus melindae melindae* and *pallidus* (o = unsexed)

<i>A. m. melindae</i>				<i>A. m. pallidus</i>	
Localities: Hawaala Buray, Malindi, Chamgamwe, Mombasa.				Locality: Mallable	
No. of specimens (8) 5 ♂♂, 2 ♀♀, 1 o.				No. of specimens 3 ♀♀	
wing	♂♂ 83-91 (mean 85.6)	♀♀ 83, 83 (mean 83)	unsexcd(ad) 85 mm	wing	♀♀ 76-79 mm (mean 77.7)
tail	„ 53-61 „ 57.6)	„ 55, 58 („ 56.5)	„ „ 58 mm	tail	„ 53-55 mm (mean 54)
bill	„ 18 („ 18)	„ 16.5, 17.5 („ 17)	„ „ 17 mm	bill	„ 16 mm („ 16)
tarsus	„ 26-29 („ 27.4)	„ 24, 26 („ 25)	„ „ 26 mm	tarsus	„ 24-25 mm („ 24.7)
weight	„ 24-27 („ 25.3(3))	„ — — („ —)	„ „ — gm	weight	„ 19-20.5 gm („ 19.6)

Description: The head and upperparts are a paler ash-brown when compared with nominate *melindae*, which is dark earth-brown above. The wings are also pale greyish-brown with the coverts edged whitish or light buff rather than tawny-buff. Again the rump and upper tail coverts are pale greyish-buff rather than dark brown typical of *melindae*. The sides of the head are pale greyish-buff and the malar stripe is fainter, areas of which are dark brown in *melindae*. The streaking on the underparts is paler ash-brown much less distinct and less extensive than in *melindae*, which is heavily streaked dark brown on the chest, flanks and centre of the abdomen. The belly is whiter and the undertail coverts are creamy-white rather than buff. The sides of the body are pale ash-brown with a few fine darker brown streaks, whereas *melindae* is buffish-brown with broader dark brown streaking. The central pair of tail feathers are paler brown than in *melindae* and contrast with the rest of the dark brown tail, and the 2 outer pairs of tail feathers are more extensively paler ash-brown than in *melindae*. The 3 Mallable birds would appear to be smaller in their proportions than those from Hawaala Buray or other Kenya specimens, including the type from Malindi (see Table 3).

Colour of soft parts (at time of collecting): Iris dark ? brown; legs pale sandy; bill dark brown, paler sandy below (from skin).

Measurements of type: Wing (flattened) 78, tail 55, culmen from base of bill 16, tarsus 24 mm, weight 20.5 gms.

Acknowledgments: I should like to thank Prof. Dr. Benedetto Lanza of the Museo Zoologico de 'La Specola', Italy, and Dr. Jean Roche of the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris for the loan of specimens and Dr. John Ash for the specimens that he has generously presented and forwarded to BMNH. John E. Miskell prepared the larks referred to in this paper. Derek Goodwin kindly examined the specimens with me and confirmed my descriptions and colour renderings and I. C. J. Galbraith read an earlier draft of the paper.

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First record of Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* from Suriname

by Arie L. Spaans and Louis Autar

Received 29 January 1982

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* breeds mainly in western and interior North America and migrates predominantly through the western United States, eastern Pacific and western South America to winter in southern South America (AOU 1957, Meyer de Schauensee 1971, Blake 1977). During the autumn migration period, however, it is observed rarely but regularly on the Atlantic coast of North America (Pough 1951) and incidentally in the Caribbean (Bond 1971). The species has been seen once (November 1977) in Venezuela (Altman & Parrish 1978), which, as far as we are aware is the only record from northeast South America. We report here another sight record from this part of the continent.

On 23 September 1980 we observed at a distance of 50-100 m two phalaropes in a coastal lagoon near Krofajapasi, c. 50 km ENE of Paramaribo, Suriname. The birds were swimming alone when we located them, but a short time later we saw several Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* and Stilt Sandpipers *Micropalama himantopus* walking around between the swimming birds and realized that the swimming birds had shorter legs and were probably Wilson's Phalaropes.

We described the birds as medium-sized waders with a small head and a rather long straight bill. When standing, the body looked similar in size to that of the Lesser Yellowlegs or Stilt Sandpipers feeding near them. When swimming, however, the birds appeared rather smaller. The upperparts were